

2013 Preservation Award for Outstanding Local Preservation Project

Silver Bow Brewery Malt House (near Butte)

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Our 2013 Local Preservation Project Award goes to the Silver Bow Brewery Malt House outside of Butte, owned by Guy Graham and Keith Blomstrom.

In 1871, Christian Nissler arrived in the small community of Silver Bow and soon after began his Silver Bow Brewery in a log cabin. By 1886, business had increased to such a degree that Nissler constructed a brick brewery on the springs adjacent to the Butte, Anaconda, & Pacific Railroad and Silver Bow Creek. That year Nissler's brewery malted 60,000 pounds of barley a month in the new stone malt house and brewed 600 barrels of beer. Nissler operated the brewery until his death in 1901. Today, the Silver Bow Malt House remains one of only a handful of extant historic malting houses in Montana, and all that remains of the once vibrant town of Silver Bow.

The Silver Bow Brewery Malt House was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. It is a two-story rubble stone building with two foot thick walls and cut stone quoins at the corners and at the original door and window openings. The basement, covered by a stone vault, had a perforated floor where the malting or germination of the barley occurred.

The restoration and reuse of this 1886 stone malt house began in 1996 with its purchase by Guy Graham and Keith Blomstrom. Over the years, they, with the help of contractor Chris Johnson and Guy's seventy-year old father (a Pennsylvanian carpenter and cabinetmaker), transformed the abandoned and decrepit building into a remarkable and unique living space. The entire interior was refitted while preserving the rustic exterior facades. The basement was transformed into a banquet hall with a stone fireplace at the north end. The project was featured in the television series, If These Walls Could Talk.

Graham, who is co-owner and head cook for the Uptown Café, and Blomstrom, a carpenter and real estate agent in Butte, took up residence in 1999, but have continued their alterations and improvements to the property since then, including the construction of two greenhouses that supply the Uptown Café with fresh basil and tomatoes during the summer.

It is through such personal and local efforts that the history of Montana is often preserved.

Please join me in recognizing the owners of the Silver Bow Brewery Malt House, Guy Graham and Keith Blomstrom.